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AUTHOR	Prasad, V. S.; Rausaria, R. R.; Lele, Nalini A.; Bhushan, Bharat
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ABSTRACT

These guidelines were developed by the Distance Education Council (India) to provide institutions with action guidelines for development and delivery of distance education programs; to provide a framework for the maintenance of standards and quality assurance; and to provide benchmarks for self assessment. The guidelines highlight three essential paradigms of distance education: learner centeredness, comprehensiveness of learning experiences, and interactivity. Sections of the report cover the following areas: distance education as a new paradigm; planning academic programs; teaching-learning design and curriculum design; program development strategy; self-instructional materials; maintenance and continuous reform; using electronic media and new communication technologies; production and copying of materials; student support services; timely delivery of services; student evaluation; institutional requirements; networking and sharing resources; monitoring and performance review; quality assurance; human resource development; and benchmarks for self-assessment. Appended is a glossary and a list of open universities and correspondence course institutions throughout India. (SM)

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INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY
K-76, HAUZ KHAS, NEW DELHI-110016
INDIA

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Guidelines
for
Design, Development and Delivery
of
Programes/Courses Through Distance Mode

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October, 1999

Prepared by
Prof V S Prasad
Dr R R Rausaria
Dr (Mrs) Nalini A Lele
Mr Bharat Bhushan

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These Guidelines

Were

Considered and Approved

By

The Distance Education Council

At its

13th Meeting Held on

3rd July, 1997

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INTRODUCTION

The Distance Education System has evolved as one of the effective modes of education and training for development. The application of technologies in providing flexible and cost-effective programmes of education and training are now widely recognised and appreciated. The unique feature of distance education is its use of a multi-media mix and student support services in the teaching/learning process. This system is undergoing changes due to rapid adoption of communication technologies in its various functions. There are various kinds of institutions which use distance mode for education and training. These are:

(I) Universities

a) Established open universities - who design, develop, adopt/adapt/translate, produce and deliver programmes;

b) New open universities - in the process of launching programmes through development, adoption/ adaptation and translation; and

c) Correspondence courses institutes of conventional universities transformed into distance mode institutes or in the process of transformation.

(II) Autonomous Institutions/Private Institutions

a) those which design, develop and deliver programmes themselves and also offer programmes developed by the others (provider institutions); and

b) those which concentrate only on delivery of programmes, developed by other institutions (deliverer institutions)

These institutions adopt wide range of practices and one could find different standards used in various institutions. The various requirements of the processes of distance education such as

planning of programmes, development of self-learning print materials, multimedia education packages, delivery of educational products and services, formative and end-assessment of student performance requires careful attention. This situation calls for the need to develop guidelines for launching of academic programmes through Distance Mode. The objective of the guidelines are:

- to provide institutions action guidelines for development and delivery of programmes;
- to provide a framework for the maintenance of standards and quality assurance; and
- to provide benchmarks for self-assessment.

DISTANCE EDUCATION : A NEW PARADIGM

1 Distance Education is not merely a new mode of education, but also a new paradigm. The three essential dimensions of this new paradigm are:

A. **Learner Centredness** that includes the whole range of self-learning, learners' autonomy in the choice of learning objectives, content and pace as well as the flexibility for catering to a variety of learning and cognitive styles and preferences.

B. **Comprehensiveness of Learning Experiences** that would relate the programme to the total personality development by offering to the learner personalised, experiential and social learning experiences by using a wide range of learning processes and activities included in the programme.

C. **Interactivity** that provides connectivity and communicability through the use of modern communication technologies that give an opportunity to learners to interact or communicate with learning resource centres, located at various nodes in the educational network.

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2. The present guidelines epitomise the above three dimensions. Distance Education with an important component of quasi-industrial nature requires careful attention to processes in the design, development and delivery of programmes. The following sections outline the general guidelines for important activities related to launching of programmes.

PLANNING OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

1. The planning, as an analytical exercise of thinking before doing, should precede the launching of all academic programmes. A Project Report should be prepared on each programme before launch. It should include information on:

   - the relevance of programme to institution's mission/ goals
   - the objectives of the programme
   - the nature of prospective target group
   - appropriateness of distance mode for acquiring specific elements of competence/skill
   - instructional design and strategies for development and use of learning materials
   - duration of the programme
   - faculty and support staff requirements
   - delivery mechanisms
   - selection of media
   - student support service systems
   - costs and returns
   - quality assurance measures
   - programme outcomes.

2. The Project Report is an important document and can be used as a guide/manual for action plan. It also serves as a benchmark for assessment and evaluation of the programmes.

TEACHING - LEARNING DESIGN/CURRICULUM DESIGN

Teaching-learning design/curriculum design should be carefully developed for each programme/course . It should include:

- learning objectives
- the syllabus
- selection of appropriate learning media
- the process of development of learning materials
- study requirements
- delivery systems
- exit performance standards.

PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1. Modularity

A unique feature of most Distance Education Programmes is their structural flexibility in offering the programmes in module form called the modularity of the programmes. A module is a sum of educational activities leading to competencies at a certain level. Each module, while being a part of the whole also has a stand-alone feature that permits its use independently of the rest of the programme. The modularity of programmes allows a learner to complete a programme as per his convenience, need, ability and pace of learning. Keeping this in view the students may be allowed to accumulate credits from different modules of a programme.

2 Credit Transfer System

To allow for the modularity of the programmes it is desirable to agree on a common measure for the size of a programme in terms of credits. Credit is a measure of study-load in terms of hours of study a learner undertakes. A credit point is accepted to be equivalent to 30 hours of study. This includes all learning activities such as reading, comprehending course materials, doing self check exercises and assignments, listening to audio programmes and viewing video programmes related to the course, reading additional supplementary material and attending the tutorials. The credit system helps in:

- looking for equivalence of the programmes/courses/ modules among institutions;
- recognition of programmes/courses/modules of one institution by another; and
- mobility of students from one institutions to other institution by credit transfer system.

SELF-INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

1. Characteristics

The learning materials used in Distance Education are usually prepared in the self-instructional format. The Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs) differ from a chapter of a textbook or an article of a journal. The chapters of a textbook usually present information in a very compact form. They are closer to reference material than to learning texts. They are organised in terms of the subject matter to aid the teacher in an institution. On the other hand, SIMs are the instruments for learning. Learner Centredness (LC) of the distance mode requires development of self-learning qualities and skills of learner through various learning processes. Hence the SIMs should have some basic characteristics as given below. It should be:

i) **Self-explanatory**: The content should be presented in a style so that a learner can go through the material without much external support. The content should be self-explanatory and conceptually clear. For this, the content is analysed logically before it is presented. The logical analysis should suggest the best order in which the content may be presented. This order maintains the continuity and the consistency of the content. Thus, the SIMs promote self-learning on the part of the learner.

ii) **Self-contained**: Efforts should be made to make the text self-sufficient so that a learner does not hunt for the additional source, or even a teacher. For this, scope of the content of the unit should be visualised in detail. While avoiding the non-essentials only the relevant details need to be presented so that the unit can cover every information required by the learners and keep away all that is not necessary.

iii) **Self-directed**: The study material should aim at providing necessary guidance, hints and suggestions to the learners at each stage of learning. The self-directed material is presented in the form of easy explanations, sequentially developed ideas, illustrations, learning activities, etc. The material performs the role of a teacher who can guide, instruct, moderate and regulate the learning process in classroom situations. Thus, the course material should direct the entire process of learning.

iv) **Self-motivating**: In distance education systems, the learners remain off the campus for most of their study-time. The study materials like a live-teacher should be highly encouraging for the learners. The materials should arouse curiosity, raise problems, relate knowledge to familiar situations and make the entire learning meaningful for them. The sense of reinforcement should be strengthened at every stage of learning and retention.

v) **Self-evaluating**: As the learners remain separated from the distance institution and the teachers, the study materials should make provisions for feedback as well. To ensure optimum learning, the learners should know whether they are on the right track. Self-evaluation in the form of self-check questions, exercises, etc., provides the learners with the much-needed feedback about their progress, reinforces learning, motivates them for learning. The course should have a built-in evaluation system by giving an appropriate number of self-check exercises, activities and 'check your progress' questions.

vi) **Self-learning**: Self-instructional materials are based on the principles of self-learning. So a unit, besides information, provides the learners study guidance, directions, hints, references, etc., - to facilitate their independent learning. To make the content comprehensible, it is supported by simple explanations, examples, illustrations, activities and so on.

(Source: IGNOU Handbook-5 on Self-Instructional Materials)

2. Some of the special features of the open learning materials are:

- clearly stated objectives
- user-friendly You and I style of writing
- shortish, manageable chunks of learning
- plenty of helpful examples
- reference to the learners' experience
- use of illustrations where they are better than words
- headings to help learners to find their way around
- links to other media where appropriate
- obvious awareness of different learners' needs
- exercise that get the learners to use the material

- space for learners to write down their own ideas
- feedback to help learners to check their own progress
- suggestions about getting help from other people.

(Source: Derek Rowntree, Preparing Materials for Open, Distance and Flexible Learning, Kogan Page Publishers)

3. Keeping in view the above guidelines the print materials should be prepared in the self-instructional format.

4. Suggestive/Illustrative Model of a Unit

A model unit structure is given below for illustration:

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Content exposition
- Revision points
- Intext Questions
- Summary
- Terminal Exercises
- Supplementary Materials
- Assignments
- Suggested Readings/Reference Materials/Set Books
- Learning activities
- Key words.

There may be structural variations keeping in view the pedagogic and learners' requirements of a particular programme/course. The defining principle of unit structure should be the learner centredness.

MAINTENANCE AND CONTINUOUS REFORM

The first step in this regard will require gathering information regarding the course performance. The information can be

collected either from systematic feedback from course users or through unsystematic collection of relevant feedback.

To update the teaching material the concerned academic institution should

- keep a watchful eye on further developments in the field concerned
- keep track of the new techniques\designs for preparing quality texts for learners
- identify and deal with errors that have crept into the printed test material
- prepare supplementary booklet updating the materials - facts and figures thoroughly.

2. The materials should be thoroughly revised at regular intervals periodically, keeping in view the age of the course, the degree of its success, the student strength etc.

USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

1. **Use of electronic and multi-media has become an essential requirement of Distance Education for delivery of programmes as it :**
   - increases interactivity and facilitates a quicker and better learning
   - provides two way pedagogic communication with learners
   - enlarges the scope and access of Student Support Services by reaching a large number of students at a time and
   - helps to create virtual class room situation.

2. **Some important electronic media used in distance education are:**

- Audio Tapes
- Video Tapes
- Radio Broadcast
- TV Broadcast
- Computer Network
- Tele-conferencing
- Multimedia packages
- Satellite communication
- E-Mail
- FAX

3. **Multimedia**: Combination of different media (audio, video, text and images) is found to be very effective in the teaching-learning process. The combination of media allows relatively quicker feedback to the learners and thus helps minimise the loneliness or isolation of the learners.

The multimedia is an important tool for delivery of education and training services as it :

- contains a large database
- is interactive and user friendly
- is on-line and
- has non-linear access to data.

A typical multimedia computer usually includes devices like CD-ROM player, sound card such as Sound Blaster, Data Cable and a range of multimedia softwares and interface facilities. The hardware requirements for a multimedia PC are: Pentium Processor, a high quality display monitor, Video Graphic Arrays (VGA), CD-ROM disk, Voice display facility, Video capture load etc,

Institutions should plan the multimedia application and

identify the proper media-mix at the planning stage of programme\course keeping in view the possibilities in a given situation.

4. Criteria for Selection of Media

The following factors should be considered by every institution before it decides on its approach to media use.

i) **Availability** : The technology, infrastructure and the trained manpower availability should be ascertained.

ii) **Accessibility** : The learners should have access to the media facilities.

iii) **Acceptability** : The teachers and learners should have a favourable attitude and a proper orientation to use the media available.

iv) **Economics** : If the production of non-print materials is too costly it becomes prohibitive to use. 2 -3 institutions together may pool the resources.

v) **Validity** : 'The validity or appropriateness of the choice of a particular medium should be tested. If a course can be taught more effectively through, say the radio than the print, it is better to choose radio as the medium.

PRODUCTION AND MULTICOPYING OF MATERIALS

The production may take place 'in house' or be contracted out. For quality production of the materials the institutions should :

- prepare a style manual for production of user friendly materials
- prepare a production schedule and stick to the schedules
- use new technologies facilitating flexible production and updating of materials

- produce materials which are attractive and in suitable form for distribution
- reproduce materials which are simple, sophisticated and of good quality
- anticipate holds-up and desire plan and mechanisms to deal with them
- the audio, video recording should be done on high quality tapes to maintain quality in reproduction and multicopying.

STUDENTS SUPPORT SERVICES

The institution should develop mechanisms for providing continuous, flexible and personalised Student Support Services and should extensively use electronic media wherever necessary and feasible for delivery of programmes. Facilities should also be provided for hands on/practical experience wherever necessary. The methods of Student Support Services may be :

- home based/personalised
- work-place based
- community based and
- resource centre based.

TIME SCHEDULE OF DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The effectiveness of a Distance Learning Programme to a great extent depends on timely delivery of services. An illustrative list of time schedule of delivery of some of the activities is given below:

	Service		Delivery
a	Despatch of text books and study material	:	Within a month after Registration of the Programme.
b.	Evaluation of Students Activities/Assignments and feedback to students	:	Within four weeks of receipt of assignments.
c.	Face-to-face contact time	:	During the weekends or at intervals equivalent of total weekends in a Semester.
d.	Response to students queries	:	Within a fortnight of receipt of query.
e.	Declaration of results after examinations	:	Eight to ten weeks after the examination.
f.	Feedback to students on their performance and progress in the programme	:	Once in every term or six months whichever is less.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Student evaluation systems should be comprised of both continuous, and term end assessments. Weightage for continuous and term end assessment vary from programme to programme. However, it is desirable that continuous evaluation may have 20 to 25% weightage and 80 to 75% weightage may be given to term end assessment. Continuous assessment should act as feedback to the learner.

1 Grading Pattern

It is desirable to adopt the grading pattern in the assessment of the student performance. Grading is a way of expressing achievements after assessment of students. Grading is a relatively recent innovation compared to the traditional practices of marking. It is an expression of learning outcomes in qualitative terms. The major advantages of grading pattern are that it :

- grading is more precise, reliable because of a scale

with a short range

- has a greater comparability among disciplines
- facilitates objective evaluation leveling out over-leniency or over-strictness of examiners
- is a more uniform means of evaluation among different universities
- is more relative and hence a reliable means of evaluating learning achievements.

In a transitional phase both grading and numerical marking may be used.

INSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Faculty

The programme should be taken as a unit for assessment of the faculty requirement in distance education.

The distance education institutions require two types of faculty; one - full-time faculty and two - part-time faculty. The full-time faculty is of two types, again

(i) full-time core faculty on a permanent basis to maintain and coordinate the essential functions

(ii) full-time contractual staff for job-specific requirements.

Part-time faculty may be used for development and delivery of instructional inaterials, and other related academic activities.

The type of the faculty available and their work-norms be clearly indicated by the institutions.

B. Physical Facilities and Equipment

An institution should have requisite infrastructure facilities at a) headquarters and b) support service centres.

The space at headquarters should take into account requirements of faculty, support staff, technical and

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professional staff for the development of print materials, audio-visual and other materials. The illustrative list of equipment required will include telephone, computers, typewriters, audio-visual aids, overhead projector, photo-copying and duplicating machines. Desktop publishing system is desirable for Distance Education Institutions.

At regional centres/study centre adequate space and equipment should be provided for effective delivery of the services.

C. Library

Every distance education institution should have a well equipped library at headquarters with good collections of books, journals/periodicals, audio, video tapes and other electronic media learning materials to serve the need of staff and learners. The future libraries of distance education institutions should be equipped with necessary technological backup to provide on-line library services to learners.

D. Computer Facilities

In view of the large number of learners per programme, the institutions should plan computerisation and use of technology from the beginning. The number of computers required may vary from institution to institution depending upon the activities undertaken. It is advisable that every study centre should have computer connectivity. Wherever computers are part of a curriculum, access to the computers should be ensured.

NETWORKING AND SHARING OF RESOURCES

The networking of the Distance Mode institutions and sharing of learning materials among them is desirable to :

- provide wider choice of courses/programmes to learners
- make the system cost-effective

- facilitate the optimum utilisation of the expertise available and
- promote student mobility.

The institution may think of

- sharing of course materials
- adoption/adaptation and translation of course materials
- adoption of audio/video programmes
- utilisation of study centre resources of other institutions and
- information and computer networking.

Monitoring and Performance Review

Every Institution should develop effective mechanisms of monitoring and programme evaluation. Institutions should identify and use input, process and output indicators for monitoring and reviewing performance relevant to institutional objectives. Appropriate nodal points may be identified in the organisational structure for this purpose. Adoption of Management Information System is desirable in this respect.

Quality Assurance

The quality assurance procedures may be developed/adopted by the institutions and a mechanism for regular monitoring of quality measures should be created at every institution.

Human Resources Development

Every institution must have a mechanism: for staff training and development and updating of necessary competencies required for launching of academic programmes.

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BENCHMARKS FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

1 Project Report - Checklist

- clearly identified target groups
- clearly stated learning objectives
- carefully constructed learning materials
- well organised student support system, and
- explicit exit performance standards
- provision for infrastructure for development and delivery of programmes
- criteria for sustainability of programme objectives.

2 Quality of Learning Materials (Print) - Checklist

- content at an appropriate level of the learners
- clearly stated objectives
- adherence to the designed format
- team approach for development process of course material
- developmental / pilot testing of learning materials as a feedback for the final project
- mechanisms for the revision and updating of the course materials
- quality assurance mechanisms

3 Electronic/Multi-media Programmes - Checklist

- media choice is based on pedagogic requirements
- each multimedia, audio-video and broadcast programmes has clearly stated objectives
- quality of media programmes production is ensured
- the process of planning, development, production, adoption/adaptation of media is clearly stated

- appropriate mechanisms for delivery and use of media are ensured
- staff is properly trained in the use of media
- learners' feedback on the effectiveness of the media collected and
- mechanisms for updating and revision of media material developed.

4 Student Support Services - Checklist

- availability of personalised services
- support services on continuous basis
- use of multi-media for support services
- pre-admission services
- timely response to learners' queries
- face-to-face tutorial sessions wherever necessary
- peer group interaction facilities and
- two way communication facilities.

APPENDIX

Standardisation of Terms

It is desirable to standardise the terms for common understanding and use. Some of the terms used in describing the activities and clusters of activities are:

i. **"Distance Education System"** means the system of imparting education through any means of communication such as broadcasting, telecasting, correspondence courses, seminars, contact programmes or the combination of any two or more of such means. In this document the terms distance education, distance learning and open learning are used inter-changably.

ii. **Self Learning Materials/Self Instructional Materials**: Materials which are specially prepared to help self-study by including features that provide continuous feedback on performance and devices for self learning.

iii. **Programme**: By a programme, we mean the whole learning experience or combination of courses in a particular field of study. For examples, Undergraduate Programme, Diploma Programme in Management, Diploma Programme in Distance Education, M.A. Programme in English, etc. A programme may be a single module or a multiple module programme.

iv. **Module**: It is a configuration of courses/blocks having an independent thematic unity leading to a coherent set of competencies.

v. **Course**: The programme is divided into courses. In conventional education, when we talk of a course, we usually refer to a subject and level such as post-graduate chemistry, primary level maths, undergraduate biology and so on. In distance education the term 'course' includes more than this. It is used to describe the teaching materials and other components of the study. A typical distance education

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course will, for example, consist of printed material and related audio and video components, contact sessions, assignments, library work, laboratory work, project work, etc.

Going back to the expression programme, the point to remember is that a PROGRAMME consists of a few COURSES. For example, an Undergraduate Programme may consist of a course in Physics. a course in Chemistry, a course in Mathematics and a course in a language.

vi. **Block**: A course is divided into 'blocks'. The block appears in the form of a booklet of around 60/80 printed pages. Generally each block presents one unified theme.

Again the point of remember is that each COURSE consists of a few BLOCKS

vii. **Unit**: The term 'unit', of a course is used to denote a division of a block. At one level it is the theme or topic and at another level it is the material used to teach the topic.

A unit, is a self-contained portion of a **block** covering one or more interwoven learning concepts. Each unit is broken into **sections and sub-sections** for the clarity of the presentation of concepts, information, illustrations, etc.

Each unit is, thus, an individual lesson and fits into the block it belongs to. It contains orientation for learners, introduction to the content, explanation of the topics covered and exercises to help them- learn the material.

All the units of a block are logically, and also thematically should be linked with each other.

The length of a unit is also an important feature to be taken into consideration. A unit should be of 5,000 to 6,000 words or 25 to 30 - typed (double space) pages (A4 size paper) approximately. This amounts to about

15-17 print pages. Keeping in view the skills, attention span and study habits of the learners, the content load of unit should be appropriate and manageable. A unit is a pedagogical unit that can be completed by a learner within a reasonable period of time, say for example, 5-6 hours, i.e. at the most three sittings. Pedagogically, the best unit is the one that can be completed in one sitting. But, then, there are constraints of thematic continuity, economy, bulk of print materials etc. which force us to opt for a unit of a larger size. However, it should not be too large to defeat the very purpose for which it is prepared, and variations may be accepted keeping in view the pedagogic requirements of a particular programme/course.

All the units, blocks and courses of a programme are interrelated and are to be arranged in a hierarchical order from units to programme.

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IMPORTANT NOTES

Open Universities

- **Indira Gandhi National Open University,** New Delhi.
- **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University,** Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University,** Nashik, Maharashtra.
- **Kota Open University,** Kota, Rajasthan.
- **Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University,** Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
- **Nalanda Open University,** Patna, Bihar.
- **M.P. Bhoj (Open) University,** Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
- **Karnataka State Open University,** Mysore, Karnataka.
- **Netaji Subhas Open University,** Calcutta, West Bengal.
- **U.P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University,** Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh.

Correspondence Course Institutions

No.	*University/Institution*	*State*
1.	Alagappa University	Tamil Nadu
2.	Andhra University	Andhra Pradesh
3.	Annamalai University	Tamil Nadu
4.	Awadhesh Pratap Singh University	Madhya Pradesh
5.	Bangalore University	Karnataka
6.	Barkatullah Vishwavidyalaya	Madhya Pradesh
7.	Berhampur University	Orissa
8.	Bharathiar University	Tamil Nadu
9.	Bharathidasen University	Tamil Nadu
10.	Birla Institute of Tech. and Sci.	Rajasthan
11.	Central Institute of English & Foreign Languages	Andra Pradesh
12.	Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya	Madhya Pradesh
13.	Dr. Harisingh Gour Vishwavidyalaya	Madhya Pradesh
14.	G.B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology	Uttar Pradesh
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20.	Jadavpur University	West Bengal
21.	Jain Vishva Bharati Institute	Rajasthan
22.	Jamia Milia Islamia	New Delhi
23.	Jawaharlal Nehru Tech. University	Andhra Pradesh
24.	Jiwaji University	Madhya Pradesh
25.	Kakatiya University	Andhra Pradesh
26.	Kurukshetra University	Haryana
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37.	North-Eastern Hill University	Meghalaya
38.	Osmania University	Andhra Pradesh
39.	Panjab University	Chandigarh
40.	Patna University	Bihar
41.	Pondicherry University	Pondicherry
42.	Punjab Agricultural University	Punjab
43.	Punjabi University	Punjab
44.	Shivaji University	Maharashtra
45.	SNDT-Women's University	Maharashtra
46.	Sambalpur University	Orissa
47.	Sri Venkateswara University	Andhra Pradesh
48.	Tamil Nadu Agricultural University	Tamil Nadu
49.	Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth	Maharashtra
50.	Tripura University	Tripura
51.	University of Bombay	Maharahstra
52.	University of Allahabad	Uttar Pradesh
53.	University of Burdwan	West Bengal
54.	University of Calicut	Kerala
55.	University of Delhi	Delhi
56.	University of Hyderabad	Andhra Pradesh
57.	University of Jammu	Jammu & Kashmir
58.	University of Kashmir	Jammu & Kashmir
59.	University of Kerala	Kerala
60.	University of Madras	Tamil Nadu
61.	Utkal University	Orissa
62.	Vidyasagar University	West Bengal

Distance Education Council

Indira Gandhi National Open University

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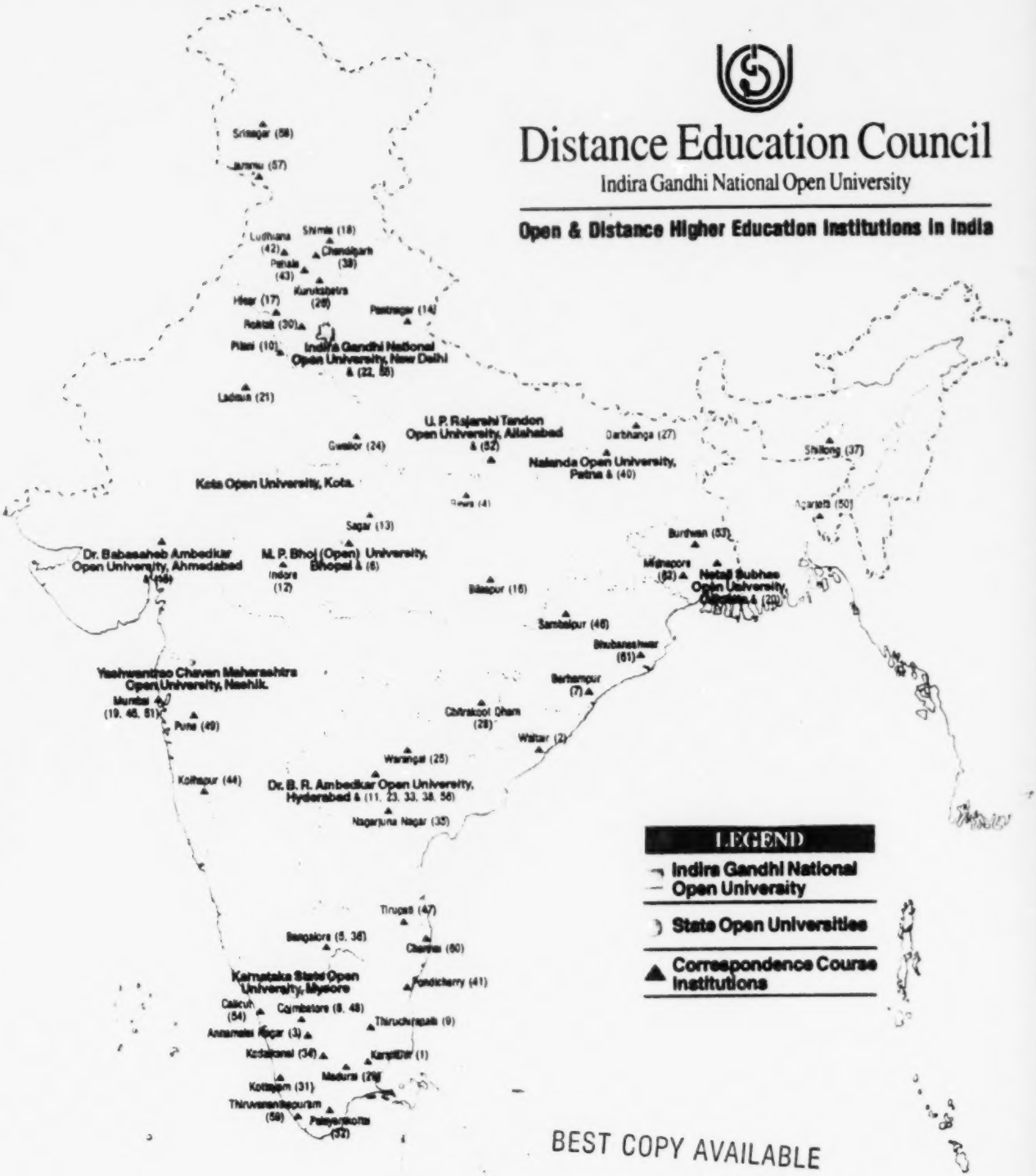

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October, 1999